

# FUNDING FOR DISASTERS AND HONORING OUR RETURNING SOLDIERS

(Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, we just finished debating and reviewing, although the time was very short, the language that would fund this Nation. That is our duty.

I'm concerned, however, that some of the cuts impacted our seniors, our young people, and our environment. We must do better, and I certainly disagree with cutting again the appropriations for this Nation impacting our veterans and their families another 2 percent.

I voted against it, and I believe that we must ensure that if America is hit by a disaster, we pay for it. We have to fight this fight again.

However, Mr. Speaker, as our soldiers return, I thank Members who are wearing the yellow ribbon, but I ask you to go home and yellow ribbon your district offices. Ask your cities and hamlets and States to put yellow ribbons out to welcome the troops who are coming home and say a job well done.

It ended yesterday with the casing of the colors in Iraq. It is our obligation and duty to not let one soldier come home to a silent America and a silent community.

## HONORING CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

(Mr. COHEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I awoke this morning to unfortunate news. A friend of mine and one of the world's most brilliant writers and intellectuals, Christopher Hitchens, passed away yesterday.

Christopher Hitchens was a brilliant man who was a writer and a provocateur. You may not have disagreed with him, you may not have agreed with him, but I think everybody knew that Christopher Hitchens was well-versed on the subject on which he spoke and could express it in a way unlike any other. I don't think there was a more erudite, knowledgeable individual on the face of this Earth.

He has left us.

To me, he was a good friend. He made my visit to Washington here easier. To his friends, he was loyal, gracious, and fun. To his foes, he was a feared enemy, a feared foe.

The world was lucky for his being here, and I was lucky for my life intersecting with his. The world shall miss him, a life well lived.

Rest in peace, my friend.

## END OF WAR IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BROOKS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the

gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked the official end of America's 9-year war in Iraq. In a low-key ceremony in Baghdad, U.S. troops lowered the American flag of command that flew over the Iraqi capital. The 4,000 remaining U.S. servicemembers in Iraq will leave by this year's end.

The Iraq war was a painful and difficult time, extraordinarily costly in terms of Americans, America's lives and resources. Nearly 4,500 Americans, including 45 Nebraskans, were killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom. 227 Nebraskans were wounded in combat. Tens of thousands of Iraqis lost their lives. We lost good men and women, individuals full of life and blessed with talent, whose proud families awaited their return to the country they loved so dear and served so well.

But in spite of our wounds, we are proud—proud of our fallen heroes, proud of the veterans who have come back to us, proud of their sacrifice, proud of their noble vision that has significantly changed the global environment where democratic ideals are now making steady gains everywhere.

The work of our troops, steadily done in the midst of extensive public debate and strategy deliberations about the war was the strength of this mission. These troops achieved what was set before them. The victories were theirs. Their unwavering commitment, their skill, and their bravery got the job done.

The troops' efforts unbound an Iraqi people held hostage for decades by an egomaniacal dictator. Insurgencies led by terrorists seeking to wreak havoc and disorder were put down by our troops. Space was created to allow Iraqis the time necessary to build the foundations of a representative government in a more open society.

But there are still challenges and significant obstacles. It would have been preferable, Mr. Speaker, for a small stay-behind force to remain for ongoing response and stabilization efforts.

The way forward will not be easy, but today Iraqis determine Iraq's future. No longer constricted by the dictates of a despot, they have held elections, they have written a constitution, and hopefully they will build a culture that respects the rights and dignity of all of their people.

America and the world needs a stabilized Iraq. Our security is strengthened by it, and we will continue a strong, diplomatic relationship to help achieve it. An Iraq that protects the rights of all of its people, Sunni and Shiite, Christian and Yazidi, and employs a government that maintains order and preserves liberties will be an Iraq that can help transform the entire Middle East looking for a new way forward.

The foundation for this has been laid, after much toil and bloodshed, by valiant American soldiers who return to us now as modern-day heroes.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

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## FAIRTAX

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WOODALL) is recognized for the remainder of the time.

Mr. WOODALL. Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the time.

I want to get to tax policy here in just a moment, but I want to take just a few minutes, having just passed the appropriations bill for fiscal year 2012, to talk about how long that's been.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know you have been a proponent of regular order since you came to this body. But as I went back and looked to see when was the last time the House was able to operate not under a continuing resolution but under a regular appropriations process, Mr. Speaker, it's been since December of 2009. December of 2009 is when we last passed an appropriations bill.

Now granted appropriations bills come in all sorts and sizes. The one we're dealing with today came in the large size. We'll call that the jumbo size. I know the minority whip shares my passion for that. My hope is we will be able to get to regular order next year and go through each appropriations bill one by one by one.

But what I say to you, Mr. Speaker, is that I came to this body a year ago to make a difference, and I wanted to make all the difference last January, I'll be honest with you. And when I couldn't do it all in January, I hoped that we could do it all in February. When we couldn't do it all in February, I hoped we could do it all in March. And, of course, we were able to pass the budget here in the House, the budget that took the first step towards reforming entitlements that we've seen come out of this body since I would argue Lyndon Johnson began these programs in the 1960s. But we have begun to make a difference.

As I look at this stack of papers here that represent the spending, the appropriations process, for 2012, Mr. Speaker, it's the first time in 2 years we've had that. Of course, over a thousand days since the Senate has been able to pass a budget. We have made progress. As 2011 comes to a close, I hope we can celebrate some of those successes along the way.

Because in terms of real spending, Mr. Speaker, in this document what we see is for the second year in a row, the first time since World War II, two consecutive years, Mr. Speaker, with this leadership team and this appropriations committee and this bipartisan House, we've been able to reduce Federal discretionary spending—\$95 billion.

A lot of folks say, well, ROB, is that going to be funny math? Is that going to be just some items but not all